

November 7, 2009 - Murtha's Remarks in Honor of the Flight 93 National Memorial Groundbreaking

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha (PA-12) released the following remarks in honor of today's groundbreaking ceremony for the Flight 93 National Memorial.

Murtha introduced HR 3971 in 2002, which authorized a national memorial to commemorate the passengers and crew of Flight 93 and established the Flight 93 Advisory Commission to (1) make recommendations for the planning, design, construction, and long-term management of a permanent memorial; and (2) advise the Secretary of Interior in the development of a management plan for the site.

"On September 11, 2001, I was in the U.S. Capitol, where the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee was meeting to markup the annual defense spending bill. We watched on television as the two airplanes crashed into the World Trade Center Towers, and soon after, evacuated the building because another plane was headed in our direction.

"As I got outside, I saw the billows of black smoke rising in the distance from the Pentagon. The plane had actually hit a section of the Pentagon that had recently undergone significant renovations. I had previously earmarked funds to accelerate the building's renovation project, and I was told that had it not been for those improvements, the building would have suffered far greater damage and more lives would have been lost.

"It wasn't until later that morning that I had learned of another plane crashing into the quiet fields of Somerset County within my congressional district. There was little known about that flight, so the following morning, September 12th, I drove back to Pennsylvania and to Stonycreek Township.

"Looking out across this field, I saw no sign that an airplane had crashed here. There were no burning buildings or piles of rubble like we saw pictured in New York and at the Pentagon. All that remained in this field was smoldering earth and a charred tree line.

"I was quoted as saying, “Somebody here was a hero, a passenger . . . or the pilot who would not fly on. There must have been a struggle. Some heroic individual brought this plane down.”

"I was right about a struggle, but I was wrong in saying “some heroic individual brought this plane down.”
In fact, there were forty heroic individuals aboard United Airlines Flight 93 that morning. Forty ordinary citizens, who together, decided to make an extraordinary sacrifice.

"In early 2002, I introduced legislation establishing a national memorial to honor the passengers and crew of Flight 93. Nearly eight years later, I’m honored that we are breaking ground on a memorial that is both fitting of their sacrifice and contribution to our great nation.

"I want to commend and complement Secretary Salazar and the National Park Service, the Families of Flight 93, our local and state officials, and all those involved with the planning and construction of the Flight 93 National Memorial.

"Future generations will look out across this quiet Pennsylvania field and forever be reminded of the story of Flight 93 and the courage and sacrifice of her passengers and crew."

#